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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 001845

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [TH](#)

SUBJECT: A WEEKEND OF DEMONSTRATIONS; NOTHING CHANGES

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Alex A. Arvizu reason 1.4 (b) (d)
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¶11. (C) SUMMARY: A small bomb of unknown origin was defused at the headquarters of the opposition Democrat Party on Monday. This follows a very successful and large demonstration Friday evening by the Democrats, who have joined the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) call for a royally-appointed interim Prime Minister. Large PAD demonstrations on Saturday and Sunday kept the pressure on the PM, who spoke to his supporters on Sunday and offered to form a government of national unity after the elections. End summary.

DEMOCRATS IN THE FRAY

¶12. (C) On March 27, a small bomb was found along the wall at the headquarters of the Democrat party (the main opposition party, which is boycotting the April 2 poll). The package was spotted by street sweepers in the morning on March 27. Police were alerted, and two explosives inside the package were defused, according to a Democrat party official. He believes that the bomb was not large enough to have caused significant damage to the building had it gone off, but it could easily have injured a passerby. Initial speculation is that the location was chosen since it is on the same side of the building as the office of the party leader. The party is working with the police to investigate.

¶13. (C) The Democrat Party, which has played only a supporting role in the public demonstrations against Thaksin, turned out a huge crowd on Friday evening for its first big rally in Bangkok since the political crisis started. The rally at Sanam Luang filled about two-thirds of the field; the crowd probably totaled close to 150,000, which was considerably larger than expected. Many of the demonstrators arrived from the provinces on chartered buses. The crowd was noticeably different from the Alliance for Democracy (PAD) demonstrations, with many participants clearly poorer and more rural than the more cosmopolitan PAD crowd. The Friday crowd responded with genuine enthusiasm to the speakers, including Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva, who outlined the party's many objections to the Thaksin administration. "Getting 19 million votes doesn't mean that you're above the law," Abhisit said, detailing the many accusations of corruption and abuse of office raised against Thaksin. The Democrats have joined the PAD in calling for the King to name an interim Prime Minister.

¶14. (C) The Democrat's Secretary-General may face charges for his accusations of election fraud against the PM's Thai Rak Thai (TRT) party. Secretary-General Suthep has been in the news for days, claiming that he has eyewitness evidence from

members of small parties who were paid by high-ranking TRT officials to field illegitimate candidates in the April 2 race. TRT had a very strong interest in ensuring that its candidates had at least one competitor, since a candidate running unopposed must get 20 percent of the total eligible vote. SG Suthep reportedly sheltered several such candidates at his home in the provinces, and brought video statements from them to the Election Commission. Now, one of the witnesses has turned the tables again, claiming that she was bribed by the Democrats to give false evidence against TRT, and that she has been held against her will by SG Suthep. Theoretically, evidence of widespread fraud by a political party could lead to the legal dissolution of that party. However, at this point, no one expects that to happen to either TRT or the Democrats. The laws against bringing false accusations of election fraud are serious, however: the wife of Thaksin crony and Resources Minister Yongyut Thirapairat was found guilty of bringing a false accusation against her victorious rival in the Chiang Rai Provincial Administration Organization and she was sentenced to almost 4 years in jail (she is appealing).

MARCH THROUGH THE MALLS

¶5. (C) The People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) staged two events over the weekend. The "usual" demonstration at Government House drew the "usual" 100,000 or more. The PAD then shifted the focus of its demonstrations to the heart of Bangkok's shopping district. About 30,000 rallied on Sunday outside the brand-new, ultra-chic Siam Paragon Mall, and marched up the main drag for about a mile to the almost as toney Emporium Mall. Organizers said that they had moved the demonstrations to the shopping malls because 1) Thaksin and his wife liked to shop there; 2) it would give more people a

BANGKOK 00001845 002 OF 002

chance to join in, since the Government House site is hard to reach; and 3) the demonstrators would have access to the food courts and clean bathrooms. They are taking a break from demonstrating until Wednesday, when they promise to come back to Siam Paragon and camp out for a while.

WHAT'S THAKSIN GOT TO OFFER?

¶6. (C) Not to be outdone, the PM spoke to a group of thousands of supporters on Sunday afternoon. He offered to form a "government of national unity" after the elections, with cabinet seats for the boycotting parties. This offer was publicly rejected by the PAD, but the opposition parties told the press they would have to discuss it among themselves. (Comment: They are unlikely to accept any olive branch from Thaksin before the April 2 vote that might shore up Thaksin's legitimacy. end comment.)

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